

MINUTES
STRATEGIC FISCAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, November 3, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Hammond at 6:00 p.m.

Aldermen present: Hammond, Kittelson, VanderWeele, Roeseler, Bohren

Other Aldermen present: Kath, VanAkkeren, Sampson, Carlson, and Versey.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited and the minutes of the Oct. 17th meeting approved. Bohren/Roeseler. All Ayes. Motion carried.

At this time Fire Chief Hermann was called upon to talk about his long range plan report. The short version of the plan was given. Chief stated we are nearing crisis mode. We have kicked these ideas around for a long time. We have retirements coming – we need to know what direction to take.

Ald. Roeseler asked the Chief what his opinion was regarding the long range plan. The Chief stated that the plan we have in place is the system that offers the best protection to the citizens. We are dedicated towards training and public education. With the 5 station model we have response times of 3 minutes or less. Second would be the 4 station model with 3 less firefighters. If we close a station – that would leave a hole that would have to be dealt with.

Ald. Hammond asked what the cost of a new fire station would be? Chief stated that would be difficult to answer – we would be looking at a 4-bay station at a cost of approximately 2 million dollars. Ald. Hammond asked where it would be located. Chief stated we would probably close the downtown and the 25th St. Stations and locate a new station somewhere between 14th St. Clair/Niagara to 17th Erie??

Ald. Hammond asked about the Fire Inspector/Training Officer and if this position could possibly be shared? Chief stated that this position was unfilled this year and that those 2 could be consolidated and moved into sharing that dept. with 25 other departments in the county.

Ald. Roeseler stated that everything is volunteer. Ald. Hammond asked about regional fire protection. The Chief stated that vision would take a commitment on our neighbors part – would move to a point where we would all respond to each other's calls. Ald. Hammond asked if there could be 1 Chief over all? The Fire Chief stated that concept is a ways off, but it is the way to go. A utility fire investigation team will run even smoother by the end of next year. We responded to Town of Wilson 4 times this year and the Town of Sheboygan 3 times.

Ald. Bohren asked about the 4 station model and what would be tacked on for response times? Chief stated that about 3 minutes more to downtown – basically adding 3 minutes to response time with a 4 station model.

The Mayor asked about closing the downtown station and how many calls do they respond to? The Fire Chief stated that the downtown station has the largest call volume and usually first on scenes. Mayor asked why we would close that station? The Fire Chief stated that would make response times greater for the downtown area. We converge on the downtown area the most.

Ald. VanAkkeren asked what happens when we increase our 3 minute response time? The Fire Chief stated that early notification is best for fires and medical calls. For effectiveness, 3 to 4 minutes difference in response time means a great deal. Ald. VanAkkeren asked if a fire changes drastically in that amount of time? The Fire Chief responded that yes, 3 minutes is best for every call – added response time is a delay. Ald. VanAkkeren then stated he was not comfortable with that and added for financial reasons we would decrease our public safety? He asked the committee to think about that.

Ald. Hammond stated that we were only looking at options and taking questions at this time.

Ald. Roeseler stated he is not a fan of closing any fire stations – we are putting a lot of liability into the picture.

Ald. Carlson asked whether each station takes part in inspections and public education – would that affect the other stations? The Fire Chief stated not really – each station would be assigned those additional duties.

Ald. VanAkkeren stated that there would be a 3 minute additional response time for every station that is closed.

Ald. Hammond asked if we were able to build a new fire house and close downtown and 25th street – what effect would that have on response time? The Fire Chief stated that response time would increase.

Ald. Versey stated that if we build a new station it is not response time but he is more concerned about enough firefighters arriving on scene. The Fire Chief stated that it is a combination of both response times and people.

Ald. Carlson asked what are the ramifications of not being compliant? The Fire Chief stated that firefighters cannot go inside with only 3 people. Needed are 5 on scene to fight the average house fire. Firefighters have to assess what they go into. The second company is 2-3 minutes behind.

Ald. Bohren asked if we go to 4 stations – what are our options for mutual aid to help out? The Fire Chief stated that the subject came up when to use MABAS – This was not intended to relieve government from their duties.

At this time a motion was made to file the document – Roeseler/Kittelson. More discussion was held on what the future fire department should look like. The Fire Chief stated we are doing the job. It was restated that we should file the document and keep the fire department model (5 stations) that we currently have in place. Ald. Hammond stated that we need to keep looking at different models for the future. Discussion continued regarding the 4 station model. The Mayor stated that closing a station is a band-aid. If council wants a smaller fire station, we need a long range plan. The question was called and vote taken. 4 Ayes and 1 no to keep the present 5 station model intact at the present time. Motion carried.

The Fire Chief will continue to look at the issue further and look at some other models. City Administrator Jim Amodeo and the Fire Chief will look at all options going forward. The Fire Chief stated that Sheboygan has an experienced department with 6 people retiring this year and more next year.

Ald. Hammond stated that it is all about efficiency and service to the people in a timely fashion. Thank you.

Motion to go into closed session at this time. Kittelson/VanderWeele. All Ayes. Motion carried.

Motion to go back into open session at this time. Bohren/Roeseler. All Ayes. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m. Roeseler/VanderWeele. All Ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Alderperson Jean Kittelson – 3rd District – City of Sheboygan.